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U.S. HISTORIAN 'SURPRISED' BY CLAIM NAZI WAS U.S. INFORMANT
NEW YORK

A historian for the Justice Department's anti-Nazi unit said Sunday he was surprised by a former American counterintelligence officer's claim that Gestapo officer Klaus Barbie was a paid informant for the United States after World War II.

David Marwell of the Office of Special Investigation in the department's criminal division said that if Barbie were based in Eastern Europe, he would have been a more likely informant, since he would have known more about the Soviet Union.

Barbie, known as "the Butcher of Lyon," was in charge of German operations in that French city from 1942-1944 during the Nazi occupation. He has been accused of deporting thousands of French Jews to Nazi concentration camps and of using torture and murder against French resistance fighters.

Erhard Dabringhaus, a professor at Wayne State University in Detroit, told NBC News that he worked with Barbie in Germany in 1948 and that the latter was an informer.

"That kind of surprises me," said Marwell, "because of where he was." Marwell noted that U.S. intelligence priorities after the war centered on the Soviet Union, and that Barbie presumably would have had little or no contact with Soviets.

Dabringhaus said that Barbie gave the U.S. government information on Nazis and that money he received for that information financed his subsequent flight to Bolivia.

Dabringhaus said he was under orders not to let anyone know the United States was aware of Barbie's whereabouts.

In Washington, CIA spokesman Dale Peterson said Sunday the agency would have no comment on the NBC report until Monday.

Marwell, who was in Brooklyn on Sunday to speak at the Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst, said in a telephone interview that Barbie was "one of the most significant" Nazis still at large, especially since "he had been located. People knew where he was."

On Saturday, Barbie was expelled from Bolivia, where he had lived for years, and was flown to France under military guard to face trial for "crimes against humanity," including the torture and killing of Jews and resistance fighters.

Marwell is one of about 50 lawyers, agents and historians in the Office of Special Investigation, which investigates people living in the United States who may have been Nazis or cooperated with them in the persecution of Jews and others between 1933 and 1945.

The office is investigating 200 cases, he said.

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